NAXOS

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CHRISTMAS CAROLS from TEWKESBURY ABBEY

Andrew Sackett, Director

Carols from Tewkesbury Abbey

Traditionally carols were not necessarily confined to the Christmas season, but were dance-songs. The dancers of Kölbigk, indeed, found themselves in difficulties with the Church, condemned by an angry priest to dance for a whole year, as a punishment for their neglect of religious duties, carolling at an inappropriate time in the churchyard. Nevertheless, even in the Middle Ages, there were carols specifically for Christmas, the season with which nowadays these songs are most closely associated. It has become the fashion to use very considerable technical and musical skill in the arrangement of essentially simple and popular music for the kind of sophisticated performance to be found in the major English choral foundations, and on these arrangements composers annually use much ingenuity and artifice.

The Tewkesbury Abbey carols open with *The first Nowell,* in an arrangement by Sir David Willcocks, a musician well known for his long association with King's College, Cambridge, and its choir, and with the London Bach Choir. The series continues with another David Willcocks arrangement, this time of an old Basque carol, with well known words by S. Baring-Gould, *Gabriel's Message.* Other fine arrangements by David Willcocks include a version of the popular *While shepherds watched their flocks,* from Thomas East's 1592 publication, *The Whole Booke of Psalmes with their Wonted Tunes, as they are sung in Churches.* The Polish carol *Infant holy, infant lowly* is included, with the fifteenth century French Franciscan processional *Come, o come Emmanuel.* Two other French carols arranged by David Willcocks are *Angels from the realms of glory* and *Quelle est cette odeur agréable?* (Whence is that goodly fragrance flowings?), the latter sung here in French. A final arrangement by David Willcocks in the present collection is of the traditional English watchman's song *God rest ye merry, gentlemen.*

A maiden most gentle appears in an arrangement by Andrew Carter and the traditional Cornish *Sans Day Carol* in a version by John Rutter. There is an arrangement of Karl Leuner's *Shepherds' Cradle-Song* by Charles Macpherson and of the traditional English *The Holly and the Ivy* by Sir Walford Davies, Master of the King's Musicke from 1934 in succession to Sir Edward Elgar. The oratorio by Hector Berlioz, *L'enfance du Christ* (The Childhood of Christ) brings *The Shepherds' Farewell* (Thou must leave thy lowly dwelling).

The Stockport composer John Wainwright, organist and singer at Manchester Collegiate Church, later Manchester Cathedral, in the year before his death, 1767, is best remembered for his Christmas hymn *Christians awake, salute the happy morn,* written about 1750. Less familiar is the traditional English melody set to *The Truth from Above* by Ralph Vaughan Williams, co-editor of the important 1928 *Oxford Book of Carols,* a reaction, like *The English Hymnal,* to the excesses of nineteenth century sentimental hymnody.

The anonymous fifteenth century words of *Adam lay y-bounden* are familiar in various settings. Not the least well known is the version by Boris Ord, predecessor of Sir David Willcocks at King's College, Cambridge, where he was choirmaster and organist for some twenty-five years. The nineteenth century hymn *As with gladness men of old* is followed by an old Basque Noel, used as a setting of anonymous fifteenth century English words, *I saw a maiden.*

Good King Wenceslas, Bohemian saint and patriot, owes its words to J. M. Neale, its melody to the late sixteenth century German *Piae cantiones* and its arrangement to Reginald Jaques, for thirty years conductor of the London Bach Choir, a position he held until 1961, when he was succeeded by Sir David Willcocks. Michael Head, a respected composer of many English songs, is the composer of *The Little Road to Bethlehem,* with words by Margaret Rose.

The Choir of Tewkesbury Abbey School

The Tewkesbury Abbey School was founded in 1973 as the choir school for Tewkesbury Abbey. Its foundation has revived the tradition begun in the Abbey which is generally acknowledged as having one of the finest acoustics in England. The choristers, who are awarded scholarships on audition at regular voice trials, are all educated at the Abbey School which is a member of the Choir School's Association.

The Abbey School Choir sings Evensong during term time on Monday to Thursday. Most of the choristers are weekly boarders and without weekend commitments, they are able to combine the benefits of a choristership - with its excellent musical and academic training - with a normal family life at weekends.

Outside the normal routine of Abbey services, the choir is increasingly in demand for concerts, recital work and recording, both in England and abroad. Recent concert tours have included visits to Germany, the Soviet Union, France and Holland. Earlier this year the choir returned to France for a series of concerts in the Loire Valley, prior to which the choristers gave a series of four concerts with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Simon Rattle.

Andrew Sackett

Andrew Sackett was born in Sheffield in 1964 and at an early age had piano lessons with Fanny Waterman. Before entering the Royal Northern College of Music in 1982 he studied organ with Jonathan Rees-Williams at Lichfield Cathedral. At college he studied organ with Eric Chadwick and Gordon Stewart and piano accompaniment with David Lloyd. During his final year at Royal Northern College he was also organ scholar at Manchester Cathedral. In January 1987 he was appointed Assistant Organist at Carlisle Cathedral and in September 1989 moved to Tewkesbury Abbey, where he is Director of the Choir of the Abbey School. He also conducts the highly acclaimed Malvern chamber choir, The Aldwyn Consort of Voices, as well as being in demand as a recitalist and accompanist.

Die Carols der Abtei von Tewkesbury

Traditionellerweise waren Carols nicht unbedingt auf die Weihnachtszeit beschränkt; vielmehr handelte es sich dabei um Tanzlieder. So kamen die Tänzer von Kölbigk tatsächlich in Schwierigkeiten mit der Kirche und wurden von einem wütenden Priester dazu verurteilt, ein ganzes Jahr zu tanzen, weil sie zu unpassender Zeit auf dem Kirchhof Carols gesungen und dergestalt ihre religiösen Pflichten vernachlässigt hatten. Gleichwohl gab es schon im Mittelalter eigene Carols für Weihnachten, für jene Zeit also, mit der man die Lieder heute vor allem in Verbindung bringt. Man gewöhnte sich daran, die ihrem Wesen nach einfachen und volkstümlichen Melodien in technisch und musikalisch recht kunstvollen Arrangements zu singen; so sind sie heute zu hören, wenn sie von den "intellektuellen" englischen Chörn gesungen werden - alljährlich verwenden die Arrangeure viel Zeit und künstlerisches Potential auf die Herstellung neuer Bearbeitungen.

Die Carols der Abtei von Tewkesbury beginnen mit *The first nowell* (Die erste Neuigkeit) in einem Arrangement von Sir David Willcocks, einem Musiker, der durch seine lange Beziehung zum King's College, Cambridge, und dessen Chor sowie zu dem Londoner Bach-Chor bekannt wurde. Es folgt ein weiteres Arrangement von Willcocks: *Gabriel's Message* (Gabriels Botschaft), einer alten baskischen Melodie mit den Worten von S. Baring-Gould. Weitere schöne Einrichtungen von David Willcocks sind unter anderem das bekannte *When shepherds watched* (Als die Hirten ihre Herde hüteten), das 1592 von Thomas East in dem Buch the *Whole Booke of psalmes with the Wonted Tunes, as they are sung in Churchs* (Das gantze Buch der Psalmen mit ihren gewohnten Weisen, wie man sie in denen Kirchen singet) veröffentlicht hat. Das polnische Lied *Infant holy, infant lowly* (Heiliges Kind, niedriges Kind) ist zusammen mit dem französischen Franziskaner-Prozessionale *O come, o come Emmanuel* (Komm, o komm, Emmanuel) aufgenommen. David Willcocks hat zwei weitere französische Lieder arrangiert: *Angels from the realms of glory* (Engel aus dem Reich der Ehre) und *Quelle est cette odeur agréable* (Was ist

dieser angenehme Duft) - das letztgenannte Lied wird hier in französischer Sprache gesungen. Ein letztes Arrangement von David Willcocks in der vorliegenden Auswahl ist der traditionelle Gesang der englischen Nachtwächter, *God rest ye merry, gentlemen* (Gott gebe euch eine angenehme Ruhe, ihr Herren).

A maiden most gentle (welch sanfte Jungfrau) ist in einem Arrangement von Andrew Carter zu hören, und das traditionelle *Sans Day Carol* (Lied des heiligen Tages) erklingt in einer Fassung von John Rutter. Charles Macpherson arrangierte den *Shepherd's Cradle Song* (Wiegenlied der Hirten) von Karl Leuner; die Einrichtung des traditionellen englischen *The Holly and the Ivy* (Stechpalme und Efeu) stammt von Sir Walford Davis, der 1934 Nachfolger von Sir Edward Elgar als Leiter der Königlichen Musik wurde. Aus dem Oratorium *L'Enfance du Christ* (Die Kindheit Christi) stammt *The Shepherd's Farewell* (Lebewohl der Hirten) mit den Worten *Thou must leave thy lowly dwelling* (Du mußt deine niedrige Wohnstatt verlassen).

Der Komponist John Wainwright war Organist und Sänger an der Manchester Collegiate Church und im Jahr seines Todes (1767) an der Manchester Cathedral; er wurde besonders bekannt durch seinen Weihnachtshymnus *Christians awake, salute the happy morn* (Christen, erwachten begrübt den glücklichen Morgen), der um 1750 entstanden sein dürfte. Weniger bekannt ist die traditionelle englische Melodie des *The Truth from Above* (Die Wahrheit aus der Höhe) von Ralph Vaughan Williams, der 1928 das wichtige *Oxford Book of Carols* mit herausgab - wie *The English Hymnal* eine Reaktion auf die übertrieben sentimentalen Hymnen des 19. Jahrhunderts.

Die Worte des *Adam lay y-bounden* stammen von einem anonymen Dichter des 15. Jahrhunderts und sind in verschiedenen Bearbeitungen bekannt geworden. Eine der populärsten Versionen stammt von Boris Ord, dem Vorgänger von David Willcocks am King's College, Cambridge, wo er rund 25 Jahre als Chorleiter und Organist tätig war. Der Hymnus *As with gladness men of old* (Mit Freude die Menschen seit Alters her) entstand im 19. Jahrhundert; ihm folgt ein altes baskisches Weihnachtslied, das hier auf die anonymen Worte *I saw a maiden* (Ich sah eine Jungfrau) aus dem 15. Jahrhundert gesungen wird.

Die Worte über den *Good King Wenceslas* (guter König Wenzeslaus), den böhmischen Heiligen und Vaterlandskämpfer, schrieb J. M. Neale, die Melodie ist den deutschen *Piae cantiones* (Geistliche Lieder) des späten 16. Jahrhunderts entnommen. Arrangiert hat das Lied Reginald Jaques, der 30 Jahre lang den Londoner Bach-Chor leitete, ehe er 1961 von Sir David Willcocks abgelöst wurde. Der angesehene englische Liederkomponist Michael Head verfaßte *The Little Road to Bethlehem* (Der schmale Pfad nach Bethlehem) auf einen Text von Margaret Rose.

CHRISTMAS MUSIC ON NAXOS

BACH:

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Christmas Goes Baroque II	8.550670

8.553077

STEREO

CHRISTMAS CAROLS from TEWKESBURY ABBEY

DDD

Playing Time: 69'36"

Andrew Sackett, Director

1	The first Nowell (arr. David Willcocks)	(4:56)
2	Gabriel's Message (arr. David Willcocks)	(2:43)
3	A maiden most gentle (arr. Andrew Carter)	(2:52)
4	While shepherds watched their flocks (arr. David Willcocks)	(2:24)
5	Infant holy, infant lowly (arr. David Willcocks)	(2:10)
6	Sans Day Carol (arr. John Rutter)	(3:17)
7	The Shepherds' Cradle-Song (arr. Charles Macpherson)	(3:37)
8	Karl Leuner: Come, o come Emmanuel (arr. David Willcocks)	(4:59)
9	The holly and the ivy (arr. H. Walford Davies)	(3:18)
10	The Shepherds' Farewell (Hector Berlioz)	(5:19)
11	Christians awake (John Wainright)	(4:26)
12	The truth from above (arr. R. V. Williams)	(2:58)
13	Angels from the realms of glory (arr. David Willcocks)	(4:03)
14	Quelle est cette odeur agréable (arr. David Willcocks)	(4:11)
15	Adam lay y-bounden (Boris Ord)	(1:10)
16	As with gladness men of Old (C. Kocher (1786 - 1872), abridged by W. H. Monk (1823 - 89))	(2:49)
17	I saw a maiden (arr. Edgar Pettman)	(2:51)
18	Good King Wenceslas (arr. Reginald Jaques)	(3:04)
19	The little road to Bethlehem (Michael Head)	(3:15)
20	God rest ye merry, gentlemen (arr. David Willcocks)	(3:25)

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